



azalea city montessori

MEMBER HANDBOOK

2016-2017

“The child is both a hope and a promise for mankind.”

-Dr. Maria Montessori

“Education is a natural process carried out by the child and is not acquired by listening to words but by experiences in the environment.”

-Dr. Maria Montessori

Introduction

This member handbook is intended to be a resource for families, employees, as well as community members, providing information regarding the policies and procedures of Azalea City Montessori Cooperative (ACM). The content of this handbook will be updated as ACM develops and evolves.

General Information

Azalea City Montessori Cooperative is an emerging, member-governed, nonprofit organization. ACM is governed and directed by a nonprofit Board in collaboration with parent members. ACM came to be as a result of the efforts of parents and teachers seeking an alternative educational option for our children. ACM is a designated 501c3 charitable organization.

Mission Statement

The mission of ACM is to promote and provide an authentic, affordable Montessori education in the City of Mobile, Alabama. All of the projects ACM undertakes must meet the following criteria: provide high-quality Montessori education, be as affordable as possible, and be governed and directed by our volunteer Board in collaboration with parent members.

Nondiscrimination policy

ACM does not discriminate in its educational programs or activities on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, ancestry, age, religion or religious creed, disability or handicap, sex or gender, sexual orientation, military or veteran status, genetic information, or any other characteristic protected under applicable federal, state or local law. Children with special needs will be accepted if they can participate in and benefit from the educational programs offered.

Goals and Objectives:

The 2016-2017 school year brings some exciting new changes. We are moving our primary (preschool//kindergarten) classroom to an independent location at Central Presbyterian Church located at 1060 Dauphin St, Mobile AL 36604, as well as piloting our new elementary program in the same facility. We plan to continue providing parent education and support as well as continuing emphasis on parent involvement and volunteerism.

The specific educational goals and objectives of ACM are as follows:

- Help each child realize his or her full potential
- Cultivate a love for learning, and the creative process, along with a passion for knowledge
- Foster independence and enhance self-confidence in each individual student
- To create a peaceful, supportive, nurturing learning environment and community for students, parents, and staff grounded in respect and compassion for others

- Cultivate a strong sense of community between members united by a shared vision and goals for their children
- To provide a strong academic foundation for future learning
- To promote an enduring sense of wonder in the child

Overview of the Montessori Method

The term “Montessori” implies both philosophy and a method of education philosophy based on the research of Dr. Maria Montessori – an Italian physician and educator. At its heart, the Montessori method emphasizes independence, freedom within limits, and a respect for the child. Classroom spaces are purposefully designed and materials carefully curated in pursuit of an education partnership. Multi-aged classrooms provide benefits that are readily apparent when visiting the classroom. Younger children in the classroom have an opportunity to observe and imitate the older students as they work. Older students have an opportunity to reinforce their own knowledge by explaining what they are doing and assisting and mentoring younger children. Each child can learn and develop at his own pace within a classroom that accommodates many levels of ability and complexity.

Montessori believed that children develop in three year cycles. The first year they are introduced to new concepts and skills, during the second year they practice and refine these concepts and skills and during the third year they consolidate their learning, reflect on what they have learned and demonstrate mastery of the concepts by teaching younger students.

The experience and training of a Montessori teacher is integral to the Montessori method. Teachers use both concrete teaching materials and a well-defined curriculum tailored to the child through each three-year cycle, from the Primary program through both levels of the Elementary program. The Montessori teacher is specially trained to observe each child and to design lessons based on that child’s natural curiosity and love of learning. The teacher is responsible for preparing the educational environment within each classroom and for presenting lessons in that environment. During the course of a day, the teacher will demonstrate a wide array of concrete sensorial materials and sequential activities through individual instruction. The child soon learns to associate abstract concepts with hands-on experience.

We have the expectation that all members of the school community participate and support the school whenever possible. It is the hope and expectation of The Montessori school that parents make every effort to understand and embrace the mission of the school. To that end, we aim to help parents learn about the Montessori approach by providing information and opportunities for parent education.

Additionally, we expect parents to familiarize themselves with the philosophy, policies, and procedures contained in the Parent Handbook and other school publications, including our regular email communications. Teachers value the assistance and participation of parents in the classroom and in adventures beyond the classroom. Both parents and students are enriched by parents’ involvement in school activities. In addition, each family is expected to contribute to annual fundraising efforts of the school. We are a non-profit and rely on our parents and alumni families to help ensure the successful future of our school.

Important points to remember about the montessori method and ACM:

1. The Montessori method is a child-paced program most effective in three year cycles.
2. The Montessori method focuses on the whole child, not just academics.
3. The Montessori Method recognizes that children learn by their own activity and the teacher's and parent's' role is to facilitate and support this child-directed process.
4. The ACM philosophy is to balance a child's needs and interests with required academic benchmarks, whenever possible prioritizing the child's interests.
5. The parent/guardian responsible for supporting the behavior standards and learning attitudes promoted at school to provide consistency and give your child the best chance of success.
6. ACM is a co-op school that thrives on parent involvement and volunteerism. Support of the co-op through volunteering and promoting the school is expected.

Member Rights and Responsibilities

As a nonprofit membership organization, ACM is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors and our members. All members have rights and responsibilities, which are governed by our bylaws.

Membership

Membership is open to any family with a child enrolled in one of our programs. Members consist of any family with a child enrolled in one of our programs who is in good standing. Members select our governing Board each year and help determine how funds are spent. Each family is entitled to one vote on all matters open to member voting.

Rights

- Vote to elect the Board of Directors at the annual meeting
- Vote on use of excess funds at the end of fiscal year
- Attend and address the Board at their meetings
- Serve on administrative committees, which directly influence classroom and organizational operation

Responsibilities

- Pay tuition in full and on time
- Complete 8 hours per year of fundraising volunteer hours
- Complete 4 hours per month of classroom volunteer hours. This includes but is not limited to childcare during member meeting shifts, classroom observation, assisting teacher with preparation of materials, chaperoning field trips and goings-out, planning special functions, serving on the Board of Directors or on the Advisory Board, managing the snack or curriculum calendar, periodic deep-cleaning or other special projects
- Attend one parent education session per year
- Participate in the snack program of your child's classroom

Board of Directors

Our current Board includes the following parent volunteers:

Ellen Tynes- *President*

Daryn Glassbrook- *Secretary/Vice President*

Micah Wheeler- *Treasurer*

Bridget Mulroy

Advisory Board

We are actively building an advisory board of experienced Montessorians and experts in the fields of education and child development.

Programs and Eligibility

Primary Classroom

The Montessori primary classroom is open to any child between the ages of 2.5 and 6 years old that exhibits social, emotional, and developmental readiness. The classroom program accommodates the 3k, 4k and Kindergarten years. Elements of readiness include being potty-trained, ability to communicate verbally, some amount of impulse control and capacity to follow directions. Readiness is determined by a Montessori-certified lead teacher during the interview process. Some children are ready as young as 2.5 but the majority of children are ready closer to 3 years old. Enrollment is on-going throughout the year on a case-by-case basis.

Elementary

ACM is opening an Elementary classroom for the 2016-2017 school year. Parent volunteerism continues to be integral in providing broad opportunities to this age group. An intimate learning environment allows children are able to pursue their own interests while developing a sound academic foundation, all within the inspiring context of the Montessori cosmic curriculum. The practical life program continues the life and craft skills introduced in primary and evolves to incorporate frequent student-initiated and student-planned field-trips to the many learning opportunities downtown and throughout the city including museums, music venues, local businesses, halls of government, as well as the natural and working waterfront. The school day will include time for art, outdoor exploration, as well as free play during recess. As classroom hours will be spent on schoolwork, homework will be kept to a minimum. The Elementary program will also be lead by a Montessori-certified teacher.

Our elementary classroom is open to students ages 6-12. The program accommodates elementary grades 1-6. Prior experience in a Montessori environment is ideal, but not required. Students younger than 6 exhibiting developmental, social, and academic readiness for an elementary environment are accepted on a case-by-case basis. Enrollment requires a phone or in-person interview with the child's primary caregiver.

Enrollment

When you enroll your child in the Montessori classroom, your family becomes a member of the Azalea City Montessori Cooperative with the above-mentioned rights and responsibilities.

New Family Enrollment Process

1. Fill out the Azalea City Montessori Cooperative [membership application](#)
2. Contact ACM to arrange a classroom tour and entrance interview.
3. Submit your \$150 per child membership/supply fee to Azalea City Montessori Co-op. Once received, you are welcome to complete enrollment immediately, or you will be added to the waitlist if one forms. This fee is non-refundable.
4. Complete enrollment paperwork and tuition agreement (this includes immunization record or medical/religious exemption certificate, Medical treatment form, tuition agreement form, pre-admission form).

Re-Enrollment for Current Students

1. Fill out the Azalea City Montessori Cooperative [membership application](#)
2. Submit your \$150 per child membership/supply fee to Azalea City Montessori Coop. This fee is non-refundable.
3. Complete the new 2016 ACM enrollment paperwork and tuition agreement (this includes immunization record or medical/religious exemption certificate, Emergency Medical treatment form, parent agreement form).

Waitlist

When no openings in the classroom are available, children will be placed on a waitlist list. In the event of an opening, charter members will receive preference for their younger children if a waitlist list forms at the time they become eligible for the Montessori classroom. Preference is given to returning students siblings of current students, siblings of former students and those planning to complete the entire 3 year program.

Days and Hours of Operation

Full time attendance in either the primary or elementary classroom is considered 5 full “school days” from the hours of 8am-3pm, Monday thru Friday. Both classrooms will follow a traditional school calendar and daily schedule, (available on our website) however, we acknowledge that many parents are in need of childcare beyond the traditional school hours and during school breaks. With this in mind, we will offer an extended day program and additional programs during summer break (starting summer 2017), and traditional school holidays. These additional hours and days are separate from school time and will consist of high quality childcare but without Montessori academic programming. The extended day program is available for an additional fee. These hours will be 7am-8am (before school) and 3pm-6pm (after school).

The school will be completely closed during the following holidays (no childcare available):

- September 5th- Labor Day
- November 11th- Veteran’s Day
- November 24th-25th- Thanksgiving Holiday
- December 22nd,23rd, 26th- Christmas holiday observed
- December 30th- New Year’s Eve observed
- January 16th- MLK Jr. Day
- February 27th, 28th- Mardi Gras

“School” Holidays (childcare available, no academic program)

- November 23rd- Day before Thanksgiving
- December 19th-21st, 27th-29th- Additional winter break days
- April 3rd-7th- Spring Break

Weather related closure/dismissals

ACM policy related to school closure/early dismissals is to follow the decisions made by Mobile County Public School System. In the event of a hurricane or other inclement weather, please monitor the local news sources for decisions regarding early dismissal and closures. Also, as required by the Board of Health, if the power is out in the school building for greater than 3 hours, school will be dismissed for the rest of the day.

Tuition

Tuition schedule for the 2016-2017 school year (August 15 to May 26th)

<p><u>Primary and Elementary Full-time:</u> \$476/Month, \$4620/School Year</p> <p><u>Preschool part-time:</u> 3 Full days/wk: \$368/month, \$1,785/semester, \$3570/school year 3 half days/wk: \$325/month, \$1575/semester, \$3150/year 5 half days/wk: \$412/month, \$1,995/semester, \$3990/year</p> <p><u>Extended Care:</u> \$126/m, \$630/semester, \$1,260/yr</p> <p>Full days are from 8am-3pm. Half days are from 8 am to 12:30pm.</p> <p><i>Part time and half day slots are available but are limited and arranged on a case by case basis. Please contact ACM Director for details.</i></p>
<p>Homeschool co-op: 1st child: \$22/wk, \$462/semester, 2nd child: \$15/wk 3rd child: \$11/wk</p>
<p>School Holiday Care \$242/yr (\$22/day)</p>
<p>Weekly Meal Plan: TBA</p>
<p>2017 Summer Session (May 30th- Aug 11th) \$140/wk full day, \$110/wk school day</p>

School Year and Holidays

School year tuition is for the period of August 15th through May 26th. Above are listed the 11 center-wide holidays (no care available) and 11 school holidays apply. Care will be available during the above school holidays for both enrolled students and older siblings for an additional fee of \$242 (\$22/day).

Tuition is due promptly according to the agreed-upon payment schedule, typically the first business day of the week, month, or semester. Timely payments directly affect ACM's ability to meet its financial obligations to vendors and employees. A late fee of \$8 will be assessed when accounts are more than 4 days overdue.

ACM is committed to making every effort to support the continued enrollment of students who may be facing temporary financial difficulty. Families facing financial difficulty are requested to discuss setting up an Alternative Payment Arrangement with the director prior to incurring late payments. Establishing an APA will allow late fees to be waived so long as the new plan is approved in writing and adhered to.

Tuition payments are the same from term to term, regardless of vacations, absences or sick days. Students enroll for the school year with the expectation of completing the year. In the event of early withdrawal or schedule change, please submit written notice of such no later than 30 days prior to either last day or date of schedule change. All schedule changes must be approved in writing. All fees are due prior to the last day of attendance.

Orientation

Orientation will be held approximately one week prior to the start of the school year, during which time new families will be introduced to the classroom procedures and guidelines. This is done to ensure that all students are familiar with classroom guidelines and feel comfortable with the classroom, materials, and with the teacher. This will also provide an opportunity for returning students to acclimatize themselves to the classroom environment. This will include parent orientation to explain the structure of the student's day, review and discuss school policies, as well as address any parental questions or concerns.

Drop-off and Pick-up

Regular School Day

Students enrolled in the regular school day may be dropped off between 8:00 and 8:25. After putting items in their cubbies, children may be escorted by their parents to the playground. Because the main door enters directly to the primary classroom, **all students arriving after 8:30 must enter through the Ann St. entrance.** Pick-up is between 2:30 and 3:00 on the playground. Teachers are busy supervising children during playground time so they ask that communications during this time be handled by leaving a message on the message board above the parent information shelf. Elementary parents may leave a message for the elementary teacher on the message board inside the classroom door. Parents desiring to have a longer conversation with their child's teacher are encouraged to request to schedule a conference.

Extended Care

Drop-off for early morning care begins at 7:00 am. Students participating in breakfast must arrive no later than 7:45. Children in afterschool care must be picked up by 6:00 pm. A fee of \$1 per minute will be assessed for children remaining past 6:00 pm.

Pick up Authorization

For your child's protection, ACM will not release a child to someone other than a custodial parent unless written authorization is provided to the school. A form will be available for this purpose. If a person not on the written permission list presents to pick up the child without prior verbal or written notification from a parent or guardian, ACM will call parents to confirm alternate release arrangements and to obtain oral authorization of those arrangements before the child is released. To avoid this inconvenience, please call and notify the director or teacher in the event of a short-notice change in plans regarding who is picking up your child.

Absences and Late policy

Regular, punctual attendance is necessary for your child to receive the full benefit of the Montessori program. Particularly during the primary years when a child is in her sensitive period for order, changes in routine can severely disrupt a child's day. For this reason, arriving late (after 8:25am) is strongly discouraged. Please notify the teacher if you have a planned late arrival day.

The teacher or the director of ACM should be notified as soon as possible when a student is going to be absent from school.

Before and after care is from 7:00-8:00 am and 3:00 to 6:00 pm. Before and aftercare must be purchased separately from school-day tuition. Please pick up children on time. Consistently late pick-up or early drop-off of children only enrolled in school-day impairs our ability to safely manage the care of children enrolled in extended care. Problems of this nature will first be addressed verbally. Continued problems of early drop off or late pick-up will be addressed with automatic enrollment of the child in extended care.

Meals and Snacks

Members will be responsible for providing a high-nutrient snack on a rotating basis per the snack calendar. Members will be notified of any student food allergies. As food preparation is considered to be a valuable learning activity, and to comply with food-handling regulations, snacks should be dropped off whole and unwrapped from the store and will be prepared for serving by the teachers.

An optional breakfast and lunch will be catered in by an outside vendor this year. More details will be made available in a separate document. Breakfast is only available to students enrolled in extended care.

If bringing lunch from home, students should bring a healthy lunch packed with a cold pack, if needed. Independence is strongly encouraged in the classroom, so food should be packed such that the child can open and eat it independently (ie. no hard to open packages or containers). Sugary drinks (including juice boxes and chocolate milk) and candy are prohibited in lunches.

Clothing

Since child independence and self-sufficiency is promoted in the Montessori classroom, parents are asked to ensure that their child is dressed in clothes that are easy to take on and off (e.g. elastic waistband). At the start of the school year, parents are expected to bring two complete

changes of seasonally appropriate clothing to be kept at school. These include pants, shirts, underwear, and socks. Please label all articles of clothing including jackets, hats, gloves, etc. Washable and durable clothing are recommended as students often work with materials in the classroom that may result in staining or soiling of their clothing (e.g. painting, gardening). Closed-toed shoes are required while at school. It is also recommended that children keep a pair of rain boots at school for use in the garden.

Show and Tell

Show and Tell will take place on a weekly basis, each Friday. Books and other educational material that might be of interest to all students are encouraged. Any items found in nature are also appropriate items for show and tell. Usually, there is a theme for show and tell related to the current classroom curriculum. This will be posted each month on the class calendar. Please do not bring toys to show and tell.

Field Trips

Parents will be notified in advance of any upcoming field trips as well as any associated fees. Parents will be encouraged to assist in some way with planned field trips if able to do so. A signed field trip permission form will be needed for a student to participate in the field trip.

“Going Out”

Elementary students will be encouraged to plan and undertake small-group field trips on a regular basis. A sequence of lessons prepares the children to conduct these trips safely with proper conduct. Parents are needed to volunteer as “lifeguards” for these trips and will receive training on how to properly supervise Goings Out.

During our pilot year, the Elementary group will be taking regular field trips on most Fridays when weather permits to a number of sites in support of a variety of ecological and cultural topics. Details of this program will be discussed at orientation.

General Classroom Guidelines

The following are some basic expectations we have for all members of our community in order to create a safe, supportive learning environment. These will be reviewed in greater detail during orientation.

- Walk in the classrooms and hallways.
- Use “indoor voices,” refrain from yelling across the classroom.
- Practice kindness toward others
- Be respectful of concentration, by taking care to not interrupt others who are working.
- Respect other students’ personal belongings
- Work together to care for the classroom by returning materials to their proper place on shelves, and by working with the materials as they are intended to be used.

Additional Elementary Guidelines

Students of this age are in a sensitive period for social responsibility and justice, therefore, management strategies are tailored to take advantage of these goals. Behavior goals include both effective conflict management and the development of internally motivated work habits that will

allow the child to meet societal academic expectations. The class will work as a group to develop a set of agreed-upon expectations, rules and consequences. These typically cover the following concepts:

- Respect the living things in our environment.
- Respect the non-living things in our environment.
- Do your best work.

Communication

Most of the communication coming from the school will be via e-mail. It is essential that we have your email address and that you keep us current if that address changes.

Most communications regarding field trips, events, calendar changes, reminders and updates will be via regular emails. It is the responsibility of the parent to keep the school updated with a current email address which you regularly check. It is also the parent's responsibility to read these emails in their entirety and respond or plan appropriately.

Each classroom is equipped with a message board. This is the best method to communicate with your child's teacher.

Email communication is welcomed but should be reserved for non-time sensitive matters. For any matter that requires immediate attention within the school day, please call the main number.

Parent-teacher Conferences

Parent teacher conferences are regularly scheduled twice a year, in the fall and in the spring. In addition, a parent may request a conference with a teacher at any time throughout the year, and the teacher may schedule additional conferences on an as needed basis. Overall, communication between parents and teachers is strongly encouraged! The teacher keeps track of individual learning for each child, making sure each is progressing. The teacher maintains careful notes and documentation on each child in accordance with the traditional Montessori curriculum. Evaluation of progress is based on the individual growth of each child.

Discipline

ACM implements discipline practices grounded in mutual respect, cooperation, and empowerment. The Montessori method operates on the principle that when children's developmental needs are met, negative behaviors will be replaced by "normalized" behaviors. Dr. Montessori recognized these behaviors as a love of work, concentration, sociability.

When a student is struggling to meet ACM's expectation of positive conduct, the staff of the classroom, the director of ACM, and family will make every effort to try to work collaboratively toward a solution.

The process of addressing behavior challenges will include:

- Observation notes and suggestions by the teacher
- A conference with parents, teacher and director
- The development of a behavior management plan
- Behavior management plan implementation period

- Re-evaluation conference to determine efficacy
- If behavior issues cannot be resolved using this process, outside evaluations may be recommended to gather additional information about the child's unique needs.
- Behavior that continues to present a safety concern or that continues to heavily disrupt the learning environment for the other children may result in the child's removal from the program.

In addition to the above processes, at the elementary level, behavior challenges are addressed in collaboration with the children. Community meetings are used to address conflicts and one-on-one meetings are used to address academic or work-habit concerns.

Health and Illness

Immunizations

According Health Department regulations: parents must provide up-to-date immunization records or a written certificate of religious or medical exemption for their child prior to the child's first day of school. .

Illness

The health and safety of all children attending classes is ACM's top priority. Any ill child should be kept at home. Children must be kept at home for 24 hours after being sent home with a fever, diarrhea, or vomiting. They should not return to school the following day.

The following are some examples of symptoms that should keep a child home from school.

1. Known contagious or communicable disease such as pink eye, RSV, flu, hand/foot/mouth disease.
2. Fever 100.5 or higher
3. Nausea or vomiting
4. Head lice

In general, children not well enough to go outside or who require more rest time than provided by the program should stay home.

In addition, if your child has a communicable disease e.g., mumps, strep, chicken pox, hepatitis, pneumonia, measles, rubella, scarlet fever, scabies, pertussis, haemophilus/influenza type b, encephalitis or meningitis you must report this to the school office.

Medication

Medications administration: Any medicine that is brought to school must be given to the teacher. It cannot be kept in your child's bag or lunch box. There are three things you must know about how we handle medications. These policies are for the protection of your child. These rules include prescription medication as well as over the counter medication. Sunscreen is considered an over the counter medication.

1. A medication authorization form must be filled out, which includes the length of time the medication is to be dispensed. This form must be completed and signed before the teacher can give your child medicine. One form needs to be completed for each medication your child is taking.

2. Give the medication to an adult. No medications are to be in lunch boxes. If you want your child to have vitamins or nonprescription drugs, please administer them at home.
3. The medication to be dispensed must be in its original, labeled pharmacy container with your child's name on it. This rule is for clarification in case of an allergic reaction and to help prevent any mistakes in medications.

Additional

Parents or their authorized emergency contacts will be notified of accidents, injuries or illnesses. Behavioral incidents and minor accidents or injuries will be communicated on a case by case basis depending on the seriousness of the incident. The classroom teacher will determine this and will communicate with you either immediately by phone or at the end of the school day for less serious matters.

In the event of a medical emergency, the teacher or director will call 911 and the emergency medical response team will determine necessary care including possible transportation to a hospital emergency room.

If your child has a food allergy or chronic medical condition that must be monitored (ie, Asthma, heart condition), please notify and discuss this with the director and teachers so that an individualized safety plan can be developed, and kept on file for your child.

Parent Education

ACM will hold a series of parent education sessions throughout the school year. The purpose of such sessions will be to familiarize the parents with the Montessori philosophy and discuss ways to support learning at home. These opportunities are also intended to enhance the sense of community within the school. Parental suggestions of topics are more than welcome!

Throughout the school year we will hold regular community and committee meetings to discuss the current state and future of ACM. These meetings are open to all friends and families interested in our school community. All meetings will be announced through our newsletters, website, and on Facebook. We greatly value parent input and suggestions and desire close collaboration between ACM and parents in the parent education program..

Visitation Policy

We encourage parents to come observe our classroom! We encourage all members to come and observe in the classroom when able to do so. Please coordinate with teachers prior to expected visit to ensure minimal disruption to the classroom. Please note that having a visitor in the classroom can interfere with the classroom atmosphere, especially in terms of concentration, we therefore ask that visitors remain seated in the place where the teacher suggests when observing. To the extent possible, all visitors should refrain from engaging in conversation or activity with the children unless otherwise discussed with the teacher. We ask that all visitors respect the children and the classroom. During parent volunteer hours, the teacher will direct the volunteer to the appropriate activities and provide guidance as to appropriate activities, and assistance. We look forward to working with you!

